

SUMMARY
NATIONAL ELECTRON MICROSCOPY VIDEO TELECONFERENCE
April 15, 2011
10AM-11AM Eastern Time

PARTICIPANTS

P&LMS-VACO: William Triest MD, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, P&LMS
Cleveland EM Program: Medhat Hassan MD, Steven Emancipator MD
Detroit EM Program: Nabihah Khoury MD, James Hatfield PhD
Durham EM Program: John Shelburne MD, PhD; David Howell MD, PhD; Walter Fennell, Ann LeFurgey PhD
Gainesville EM Program: William Clapp MD
Madison EM Program: Terry Oberley MD, PhD; Joan Sempf
Miami EM Program: Victoriano Pardo MD, Rafael Valenzuela MD, Sabrina Navarro, David Shupe,
Maribel Mercado
Philadelphia EM Program: Eugene Einhorn MD, David Sharpe

MODERATOR: DR. JOHN SHELBURNE, NATIONAL VA EM PROGRAM COORDINATOR

1. Dr. Shelburne welcomed and introduced all participants with special appreciation to Dr. William Triest, National Director, P&LMS, for joining the call.

Promotion of EM Program Facilities and Services to VA's Nationwide

2. He introduced a topic of interest to all VA's, the closure of the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) and the opening of the Joint Pathology Center (JPC). JPC will be creating but does not yet have an electron microscopy laboratory and, unlike AFIP, will begin charging VA facilities for pathology consultations including Electron Microscopy on October 1, 2011. Dr. Triest has offered the National EM Program an opportunity to speak during an upcoming national P&LMS conference call and to extend the services of our EM programs to other VA's. With overnight shipping readily accessible, EM Programs can interact readily with VA's outside their geographic areas.
3. Dr. Triest noted that there is a move within VA to create National Centers of Excellence for specialized, scarce technologies such as electron microscopy and thus to improve efficiency of utilization. He also agreed that with shipping methods of today the EM Program facilities can be a national resource that is protected by being fully utilized. An added advantage to the field is that VA-VA utilization avoids all the contracting issues associated with use of private enterprise outside the VA system.

VA National Diagnostic Electron Microscopy Program

VHA CO Pathology and Laboratory Medicine

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Thanks to EM Programs for Great Annual Reports and Importance of Clinical Summary

4. Dr. Shelburne thanked all the EM program directors for the great work they are doing in providing excellent patient care and in preparing and submitting the comprehensive annual program reports and cases for quality assurance review. He emphasized the importance of the one-paragraph summary of each case which includes how EM contributes to the clinical diagnosis for the patient and the significance of EM in making the diagnosis. This paragraph is also an opportunity to help the Ad Hoc EM Review Committee understand the actual turn-around-time for the case, defined as the time from when the decision is made to perform EM to the time any clinically significant findings are called to the patient's provider.

Ad Hoc EM Review Committee Reports and Annual Program Review Letters

5. Dr. Shelburne reported that the Ad Hoc EM Review Committee met at the end of February to present and discuss the reviews of each program's cases and that the annual program review letters had been mailed to the Network Directors this week. Once the letters arrive, he encouraged each program director to contact him to discuss the Review Committee's detailed and often educational comments about each case. He requested that each director send him dates and times when each would be available for such discussions so that he could phone each person to convey the more detailed information that could not be included in the program review letters.

Individual Program Activities, Areas of Expertise

6. Dr. Shelburne opened the floor for each Program Director to comment on his/her program activities, any suggestions for changing or improving the review process, the types of specimens each program will be interested in receiving from other VA's and areas of expertise:
 - a. **Cleveland EM Program:** Dr. Hassan, EM Program Director, and Dr. Emancipator, Chief, Cleveland P&LMS, both expressed enthusiasm for receiving specimens from other VA's; each has expertise in renal and tumor ultrastructure.
 - b. **Detroit EM Program:** Dr. Khoury, Chief, P&LMS, provides on-site diagnostics for tumor pathology, while renal and muscle diagnoses are performed at the affiliate University. Dr. James Hatfield, technical director of the program, will be retiring in June, and Dr. Khoury requested information on possible schools or programs that train EM technical staff. Dr. Shelburne congratulated Dr. Hatfield on his upcoming retirement as did all the call participants.
 - c. **Durham EM Program:** Dr. Howell, Chief, P&LMS, has extensive expertise in renal pathology and superb technical support from Walter Fennell and Eva Whalin. This program currently provides EM diagnostics to all VISN6 facilities as well as to the VA in Augusta, GA. The facility

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has expertise also in tumor pathology and in electron probe x-ray microanalysis for elemental localization and can accommodate additional specimens in all these areas.

- d. **Gainesville EM Program:** Dr. Clapp, EM Program Director, expressed his appreciation for the comments of the EM Ad Hoc Review Committee in the annual program review; these comments facilitated acquisition of a higher resolution digital camera for their electron microscope. This lab provides EM renal diagnostics to neighboring Shands Hospital, University of Florida, as well as to the University outreach pathology program. Dr. Clapp and P&LMS Chief Dr. Byron Croker have expertise in renal, tumor, nerve and muscle ultrastructure and, uniquely among the VA's, expertise in platelet and congenital disorders. Dr. Shelburne praised Gainesville, Madison and Miami for their outreach programs, each of which has multiple sharing agreements with other facilities that bring in significant income to their respective facilities.
- e. **Kansas City EM Program:** Dr. McGregor could not be present due to a prior commitment to attend an off-site clinical symposium.
- f. **Madison EM Program:** Dr. Oberley, EM Program Director, provides kidney pathology services for other VA's within VISN12 and other hospitals including University Hospital, University of Wisconsin, Madison; other areas of specialty include tumor and transplant diagnostics. Dr. Oberley also has research sharing agreements and special facilities for performing morphometrics and immunolocalization and quantitation at the EM level. Dr. Oberley also obtained a new fully digital transmission electron microscope in 2009. He commented on the Madison Area Technical College which has a training program in electron microscopy and the students who work in his laboratory as part of their training (see also Para. 9 below).
- g. **Miami EM Program:** Dr. Pardo, EM Program Director, and Dr. Valenzuela, Chief, Miami P&LMS, both expressed enthusiasm for providing renal diagnostic services. They commented on the availability of excellent technical support as well as a fully digital transmission electron microscope for ultrastructural diagnostics. Miami has sharing agreements/outreach to over 30 hospitals in the Miami area.
- h. **Philadelphia EM Program:** Dr. Eugene Einhorn, EM Program Director, noted that his facility would welcome specimens from other VA's especially those in his area of expertise, tumor diagnostics. Philadelphia has new directors of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Service and of Anatomic Pathology, both of whom support the activities of the EM Program.
- i. **Seattle EM Program:** Dr. Thorning, EM Program Director, was absent as a result of his recent travel/vacation; Dr. Shelburne commented on the superb electron microscopy montages which Dr. Thorning prepares and exhibits for teaching purposes.
- j. **San Francisco EM Program:** Dr. Huang, acting EM Program Director, was not present but his EM focus is primarily research in neurobiology.

Sharing Agreements for Clinical Diagnostics and Research Studies

- 7. Dr. Shelburne emphasized the importance and desirability of Sharing Agreements not only for Diagnostic EM but also for Research studies requiring EM. He recalled that, when the national EM program was initiated by Dr. Marjorie Williams in the 70's, the goals were to conduct both clinical care

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and research; these goals continue to coincide with the VA national mission of Teaching, Research, and Education. Research Sharing agreements can bring in revenues to the hospital, and improve care and turn-around-time by optimization of instrument and technical capacity.

Future V-tel Conferences

8. The discussion was opened for comments on holding future V-tel Technical and Scientific presentations; several labs agreed that such presentations would be beneficial. The EM Program office will contact each program regarding frequency, times/dates of these presentations.

Open Discussion

9. Dr. Khoury requested information on EM technical schools and other training possibilities for recruiting EM technicians/technologists. Dr. Oberley opens his Madison VA EM Lab to selected students in the [EM Program at Madison Area Technical College](#), Madison, WI, so that they have an opportunity to do an electron microscopy research project before they graduate. Dr. LeFurgey noted that the [San Joaquin Delta College Electron Microscopy Program](#), Stockton, CA, also offers EM certification and an associate arts degree for students. Both schools provide excellent employee candidates for VA EM labs recruiting new technical staff. Links to the web sites for these programs are provided here and also on the [VA Diagnostic EM Webpage](#) [<http://matcmadison.edu/plus/electron-microscopy> ; <http://www.deltacollege.edu/dept/electmicro/index.html>; <http://www.va.gov/DIAGNOSTICEM>].
10. Dr. Hatfield commented on the fact that even though the Detroit EM facility is reimbursed by researchers for the scope usage and preparation time involved with research studies, those funds go to the hospital general fund but do not go directly to support the EM Program. In this instance Researchers are asked to replenish any consumables used in the course of their EM studies, thus contributing to the operations of the EM lab. Dr. Shelburne and other Program Directors agreed that this was an appropriate request and such in-kind reimbursement should be considered by other EM programs.
11. Dr. Shelburne asked Dr. Triest to comment on the implementation of the new Cerner Millennium package as part of the Lab Re-engineering project. Dr. Triest announced that the alpha test site, Huntington, WVA, was in the 3rd week of testing of the package. Some delays have occurred that are primarily related to the inadequate numbers of staff available to resolve connectivity issues, on both the Cerner side and the VA side. Two beta test sites have been selected, East Orange VA, in New Jersey, and Phoenix VA, in Arizona. Because the P&LMS re-engineering project is further along the implementation pathway than any other, Roger Baker, Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology and Chief Information Officer for the Department of Veterans Affairs, has tasked Lab to prove the concept of using Commercial Off-The- Shelf (COTS) software. If Lab is successful in demonstrating its utility at the alpha and beta sites, then DOD may join the Lab Re-engineering project, and many more resources could be brought to bear on the overall implementation.

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Although EM, as currently envisioned within the basic Surgical Pathology package, is primarily text-based, there is already discussion of incorporation of imaging, with perhaps a thumbnail image linking to all the full images stored in the Vista imaging package.

Dr. Triest responded to questions about the timeline for implementation emphasizing that time to field deployment depends on availability of staff. Whereas Mr. Baker would like to target deployment nationally within 18 months (2012), Dr. Triest envisions 2+ years as more realistic and solely dependent on the ability to mobilize staff with expertise to the project.

Dr. Triest also congratulated the group on their service to the VA and expressed his pride in working with the dedicated staff in Electron Microscopy and Pathology and Laboratory Medicine. He noted that the upcoming Lab Week celebrations are an opportune time to recognize and give credit to the accomplishments of Lab staff that, just as the veterans we serve, often go unrecognized.

12. Dr. Shelburne closed the meeting with reading of a Certificate of Commendation for Mr. Mike Brophy, VACO, who has provided outstanding national administrative and quality management support to the EM Program over many years. Mr. Brophy, who retires next week, could not be present but the certificate will be mailed to him.

Next Teleconference: To be scheduled for next quarter

Thanks for your participation!

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